

REMARKS

Claim 20 stands rejected under 35 U.S.C. §112, first paragraph, and second paragraph, as failing to comply with the written description requirement and being indefinite. Since this claim is cancelled, the rejections are now moot.

Claims 1-7, 10, 12-17, and 20-21 stand rejected under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) as being unpatentable over Applicant's Admitted Prior Art ("AAPA") in view of Sweeney (U.S. Patent No. 1,559,804). Since these claims are cancelled, the rejection is now moot.

Claims 9 and 11 stand rejected under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) as being unpatentable over AAPA and Sweeney, and further in view of Elliotte (U.S. Patent No. 2,663,894). Since these claims are cancelled, the rejection is now moot.

New claims 22-26 are added for consideration. Support for these claim amendments can be found in Applicant's Specification on page 2, line 23 to page 8, line 35.

New claim 22 includes, among other things, a vibration transmission suppressing mechanism for maintaining a distance between an inlet pipe and a fixing block in an extending direction of a flexible pipe so as to not shrink the flexible pipe at a time of evacuation. The vacuum pumps are provided in parallel with each other with a gap therebetween, and the vibration transmission suppressing mechanism is provided between the vacuum pumps. Specific support for this feature can be found in Applicant's Specification and the related description of FIG. 2, wherein two adjacent vacuum pumps 18 have an anti-vibration mechanism 46 provided between the vacuum pumps.

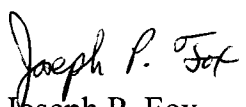
Advantageously, the anti-vibration mechanism 46 can be placed within an installation area of the vacuum pumps 18. As a result, it is possible to achieve the unexpected effect that the mechanism 46 can be configured to be very simple and inexpensive, as discussed in Applicants Specification on page 8, lines 34-35.

Based on the innovative structure of the mechanism and arrangement relative to the vacuum pumps, Applicant respectfully submits that the features of new claim 22 are not obvious over the cited prior art of record. For this reason, Applicant earnestly solicits allowance of new claims 22-26.

For all of the foregoing reasons, Applicant submits that this Application is in condition for allowance, which is respectfully requested. The Examiner is invited to contact the undersigned attorney if an interview would expedite prosecution.

Respectfully submitted,

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